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ABSTRACT

A study compared the self-esteem of adolescent females in English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) programs with that of their peers of the same age in regular curriculum classes. Subjects were 35 girls aged 13-17, of whom 16 were ESL students and 19 were in regular curriculum classes. All were administered the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale. The expectation was that ESL instruction would have a positive effect on self-esteem. However, results indicate that ESL girls function at the same low level of self-esteem as those in the regular curriculum. It is concluded that increased sensitivity to the needs of female adolescents in general, and awareness of the individual needs of ESL girls, are needed. Appended are the self-concept scale and seven tables presenting the data. Contains 45 references. (Author/MSE)

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Self-Esteem in the ESL Female Adolescent as Compared to Self-Esteem in the Non-ESL Female Adolescent

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine how the self esteem of adolescent females in English as a Second Language (ESL) programs compares to the self-esteem of females of the same age who are in regular curriculum classes. This study surveyed 35 female adolescents, ages 13-17, of whom 16 were ESL students and 19 were in regular curriculum classes. The Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale, subtitled "The Way I Feel About Myself", was administered to all subjects in their homeroom classes. The main goal of the study was to determine the role, if any, that ESL instruction has in fostering self-esteem in adolescent girls. The expectation was that ESL instruction would have a positive effect on adolescent female self-esteem. Results, however, indicate that ESL girls function at the same low level of self-esteem that regular curriculum girls do. Such results call for increased sensitivity to the needs of female adolescents in general and an awareness of the individual needs of ESL girls.

Chapter I: Introduction to the Study

Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free...Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost, to me. I lift my lamp beside the golden door!

-Inscription on the base of the State of Liberty; from *The New Colossus*, by Emma Lazarus.

"The tongue-tied Americans erect the sign: 'Welcome to the United States; we can't speak your language.'"
-Lyrics from a Paul Simon song.

Since its origin the United States has been a beacon of freedom for people the world over. So inflated is its reputation that it has continually motivated people to sacrifice everything for the promise of a new life in a land brimming with opportunity. But these immigrants, do they anticipate the hurdles; the prejudice, the cultural barriers, the social and economic adjustments.....a language that they cannot understand? English as a Second Language (ESL) classes were created to help struggling non-English speaking children and adults learn English as quickly as possible so that they might be productive citizens.

Hypothesis

Judging from the challenges that are inherent in the development of adolescent girls, as well as the challenges that lie in the educational experiences of ESL students in the United States, we hypothesize potentially poor adjustment among adolescent females in ESL curriculum. We further hypothesize that ESL services designed specifically for these students will have a positive impact on the self-esteem of this growing population.

Overview

It is the intention of this study to investigate the effect that ESL programs have on the self-esteem of a narrow portion of the ESL population, specifically adolescent girls. It follows then, that the following chapter, the literary review, is weighted in two general areas of research, ESL methodologies and adolescent self-esteem.

Following the Literature Review is a chapter devoted to the design of the study. Included in this

design chapter will be discussion of the sample used in this study, as well as discussion regarding the measures, method, and steps that were taken to analyze the data. An analysis of the results of the study comes after the design chapter, and is followed by the final chapter which details a summary, limitations, and conclusions.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Focus: ESL

ESL as defined for the purposes of this study should be thought of as instruction designed specifically for the student entering American schools without or with few skills in written or spoken English.

Research in the ESL area pointed this study in the direction of planning and organizing events in the middle school classroom in such a way that they promote the development and use of the second language in addition to the self-esteem of the student. Given the fragile nature of adolescent self-esteem and the additional challenges that face ESL students, teaching ESL on the middle school level should be more than the process of creating the opportunity and the need to use English at school; it should endeavor to foster self-esteem. In order to arrive at generalizations about what characterizes effective ESL instruction, one must look at the vast history of ESL program development as well

as strengths and weaknesses in specific instructional methodologies.

Changing Demographics

The tremendous influx of recent immigrants to the United States who do not speak English presents a special challenge to schools throughout the country. In 1988, the U.S. Department of Commerce reported well over four million immigrant arrivals to the U.S., the highest number since 1924 (Ignash, 1992). More specifically, the 1990 census shows that since 1980, the population of Asian and Pacific Islanders living in the U.S. has increased by 108 percent and that of Hispanics by 53 percent (Rosenthal, 1992). This has meant that over two million students are learning or have learned English for the first time in American public schools, grades kindergarten and high school (Jama, 1992). It is estimated that nearly four million students between the ages of 5 and 14 will have limited English proficiency by the year 2000 (Oxford et al., 1981).

The influx of students has presumably affected teachers in all areas of the country. Many communities that have been historically homogenous have found themselves with a rapidly growing immigrant population whose language, culture, and economic standing are decidedly different from anything they've experienced before.

As Valentin suggests, the influx of a student population in need of ESL services is a phenomenon that is likely to be permanent. "As long as political strife continues around the globe, there will be refugees fleeing to the United States. As long as economic realities dictate the movement of foreign-owned factories and offices to the United States, there will be children of those foreign nationals to educate. Clearly, the future holds the promise of more change, not less" (Valentin, 1993, p.31).

Multi-levels

In regard to the ESL student population, make no mistake, these students are a special group of at-risk

pupils. ESL students stand apart from other at-risk groups in that their additional challenges include cultural and linguistic adaptation to arguably one of the most complex languages in the world, standard English.

ESL students come from a vast variety of language and cultural backgrounds. Some ESL students come from native cultures that are largely illiterate. Almost all ESL students will experience difficulties developing pragmatic competency in the English language. Imagine how varying levels of communication competence affect students' adjustment. In reality, there will always be multi-level classes as long as the life situations of children dictate their previous learning situations (Shimatani, 1986).

Regardless of the ability level of each individual ESL student, their program in English as a Second Language is essential for academic survival. It can be argued, then, that ESL instruction should be likewise instrumental in self-esteem development in individual students as well. As Huck states, "[ESL] class helps

social and cultural adjustment as well as conversational growth" (Huck, 1984, p.42).

Current views on ESL teaching stress proficiency in speaking and writing as outcome goals, but what of self-image development? If instruction is conceptualized in terms of developing communicative competence, how is this end being reached, and what special provisions are made to assist the ESL student with their unique challenges? ESL students enter the mainstream classroom with numerous difficulties including, but not limited to, their need to adjust to a style of education that may be different from what they're familiar with, inadequate or non-existent language preparation, the possibility of discrimination based on physical attributes, accent, country of origin, as well as differences in culture and behavior (Rosenthal, 1992). Even if an ESL student is fortunate enough to escape the prejudice of his or her peers based on his ethnicity, "academic standing has been found to have a greater influence on acceptance than does ethnicity" (Hoffman et al., 1992, p.758). Clearly, then, ESL services need to

provide the student with superior instruction if only to allow him or her to achieve academic competence needed for social acceptance.

Common sense should dictate some basic yet critical ingredients to successful ESL instruction that promotes positive self-esteem. For one, an ESL program should be based on the student's backgrounds and needs. A second tenant upon which all successful ESL programs are established, is that learners are empowered as language users. Lessons must contain a variety of language development activities. Functioning most effectively as a facilitator, in class the teacher should steer the students towards appropriate activities. Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly, the teacher must present a supportive environment to the ESL student. Welcoming surroundings not only allow students to feel comfortable sharing the knowledge they have and practicing the new language, but it can foster the confidence that is crucial to language learning and adolescent socialization.

Research on the relationship between self-perceptions (as in self-esteem) and school success consistently point to a number of correlations that link positive self-esteem to the following school variables: 1) Participation, 2) School Completion, 3) Social Status, 4) Behavior, 5) Self-Direction, and 6) Achievement (Beane et al., 1987). It is arguable that, other than behavior considerations, ESL students face an extra challenge in all the other five school variables based on language and cultural handicaps. For instance, students may not be aware of accepted behavioral patterns within the school and classroom or they may have trouble making cultural adjustments at school because of the conflict this poses within their families (Bernache et al., 1986).

Pull-Out Programs vs. Integrated Language Development

Often, ESL instruction is relegated to pull-out programs in which students leave the regular classroom to receive their English lessons. Pull-out programs have been criticized on four major fronts. First, the ESL

student may experience a stigma attached to being pulled out of class, as this often signals a problem in the eyes of the other students. Secondly, the ESL instruction that the student receives cannot necessarily equate the needed second language development that takes place during regular content-area instruction. A third drawback is that ESL lessons are usually unrelated to curriculum content in the regular classroom. Finally, the regular classroom offers vital concept development that pull-out ESL students miss when they are absent from regular instructional settings. Rather than isolating ESL students from the mainstream of American education in pull-out programs, more effective in ESL instruction is an "integrative language development approach", more commonly referred to as *content-based ESL*. This type of instruction integrates regular basic skills instruction in a mother language with English-language development (Milk, 1985). This approach, again, is generally preferred over pull-out programs because of its proven effectiveness in not only student achievement but student adjustment as well. Children who

go for part of the day to a classroom filled with speakers of their mother tongue who understand them have an opportunity to succeed and produce work in their native language. An upper elementary school teacher with extensive ESL instruction experience, Alejandra Maudet (1994) points out, "with the pull-out programs, all day long, [ESL students] are totally paralyzed; they're not able to compete academically or socially, especially."

Sometimes referred to as bilingual education, content-based ESL enables students to maintain their ties to their own families. Maudet, prefers a bilingual classroom in which students are taught the basics (math, English) in their native language, on top of ESL services. ESL students remain in the bilingual atmosphere for two to three years before they move into the regular curriculum class.

Children who learn only English in pull-out programs are often traumatized because they eventually forget their language, which strains relationships at home and with their community. Another reason that bi-lingual education is important and could possibly

strengthen ESL students' self-esteem is that "the child sees that his own language is being given a value in his school..that others are speaking it and that it is being used in other areas" (Maudet, 1994).

Communication Apprehension

A generalized anxiety or fear about oral communication, known as "communication apprehension," can be potentially devastating to the ESL student's language growth and development of healthy self-esteem. Most teachers of non-native speakers consider insecurity and lack of self-confidence the biggest stumbling block in empowering students to progress linguistically (Radin 1985).

If the common definition of communication is the "mutual exchange of information and ideas," the key word is "mutual" because, as Lucas (1984) argues, "it is when mutualness breaks down that communication ceases. This idea holds true in the classroom as well as in interpersonal relationships" (Lucas, 1984, p.1). It can be reasoned, then, that if communication apprehension

thwarts normal communication channels, ESL students that suffer from such apprehension are being handicapped in developing normal socialization skills, a vital aspect of positive self-esteem. Given that students from differing cultural backgrounds often lack successful social interaction skills, it is the responsibility of thorough ESL instruction to empower students to defeat their fear of failure in social situations. As mentioned, the first step in empowering students is to create a warm, and comfortable atmosphere in the classroom.

Being paired up with an English-speaker who also speaks the ESL student's "mother tongue" allows students to learn the ropes, to be introduced to the group, or simply to learn how to open a locker. For these students, the language is not the only barrier, it is also an issue of culture. "Something as simple as being in gym and having to tell the gym teacher that you're having your period and that you're not going to take a shower..It's things as simple as that that become horribly traumatic for ESL kids" (Maudet, 1994). Peer

tutoring and peer companionship says, "I'm okay!", and that message is crucially important for adolescents.

Large Group vs. Small Group

Where students are consistently grouped according to language dominance, ESL pupils will always be ranked toward the bottom, regardless of their academic ability. It is suggested that in such a situation maximum learning for both ESL and regular students cannot occur. It is then advised that alternate means of grouping be practiced in a classroom where an ESL student is present.

Cooperative learning, which fosters higher self-esteem and learning motivation and offers advantages to ESL instruction, is seen as one of the best strategies in the integration of non-English speaking students into the mainstream classroom (Calderon, 1989), (Jama, 1992). Several of the benefits of cooperative learning with ESL students is that it helps Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students develop a positive image of themselves and others, and enhances positive ethnic relations

(Calderon, 1989). One cooperative learning strategy, cross-peer tutoring, benefits the ESL tutee by increasing individual attention and providing closer instructor contact which results in increased learning efficiency. Additionally, it features the positive influence of a role model, and ultimately acts to increase *self-esteem* (Hall, 1985).

There are strong indications that non-English speakers profit from having classmates who are native-speakers of English. ESL students' interaction with classmates who are fluent English speakers enables the ESL student to develop a native-like control of English (Wong, 1983).

It is important to note however, that teachers have the responsibility of creating opportunities for interaction between the language learners and the target language speakers. This responsibility calls for teacher awareness of individual differences in likes and dislikes among the students, and a kind of deliberate matching of children in order to increase the likelihood of interaction. Pairing children who can draw each other

out, and who compliment one another socially may be a key to language learning (Miller, 1993).

It is generally accepted that language is learned through interaction. Given this, classroom activities should promote the kinds of meaningful interaction that enable students to comprehend their peers' language. In order to achieve comprehension, pair and small group participation structures are essential (Johnson, 1988). Shimatani (1986) further supports the validity of small-group work among non-native speakers based on both pedagogical claims, research findings obtained in and outside the classroom, as well as then-recent second-language acquisition theories (Shimatani, 1986).

Learning Styles

ESL students from different language backgrounds sometimes differ from one another in their learning style preferences. Reid (1987) argues that identifying the learning style preferences of non-native English speakers may very well have wide-reaching implications in the area of student orientation. An instructor's

potential for adapting to the evolution, expansion, and/or modification of learning styles for ESL students is directly related to the students' cultural adjustment. Learning styles relate to cultural adjustment which holds a potential bearing on self-esteem development.

A Question of Cultural Shock

Research at the turn of the century questioned the influence of culture in adolescent adjustment, while anthropologists in the 1930's published findings that socioemotional functioning is culturally relative (Smith et al., 1992). Fifty years later, Offer, Ostrov, Howard, and Atkinson reviewed self-image in adolescents from ten different countries and found "much similarity" in socio-emotional adjustment across cultures. Yet there is a substantial body of research that has appeared in the past 15 years that illustrates how much culture shapes our view of the world, our behavior, our interpretation of events around us, as well as a variety of social factors (Field et al., 1990). Of interest to

this study is the fact that ESL students in America are faced with a double challenge: immigrant students in the U.S. must deal with two cultures, the culture of their parents, and the culture of dominant society. Bernache et al. (1986) stress that one of the major problems that the ESL student faces is cultural conflict with their families as they begin to make cultural adjustments at school and with American peers.

ESL instructors must be particularly sensitive to the student's previous adjustment to a different culture. Fillmore (1981) itemizes several cognitive activities that appear to vary in different cultures and that may have an influence on the ESL student's experience. While the items do not imply a difference in students' abilities, Fillmore does reflect on how the following activities are valued in different cultures: sustained and systematic attention (both the child's willingness to remain with a given task and the child's attitude towards this kind of activity), verbal memory (is the child familiar with memorization, repetition, and recitation?), and playfulness (manipulating

materials, willingness to experiment). Ignoring these cultural differences and how they affect ESL instruction methodologies can script some students for failure, which can negatively affect self-esteem. It is arguable that acknowledgment of these factors in ESL instruction can greatly increase the possibility of positive self-esteem development in ESL students by setting up students for success.

Rosenthal et al. (1983) very aptly state the culture challenge of today's ESL students. They believe that for first and second-generation immigrant adolescents, the problem of coping simultaneously with new and old cultures undoubtedly has effects, as yet relatively uncharted, on adjustment. Where different norms and expectations are held by the dominant and the minority groups, adolescents may find it difficult to integrate these, especially when competing claims from family and from the broader societal context make messages about appropriate behavior, values, and attitudes conflicting or unclear.

Whereas culture and language are intrinsically interwoven, so are the difficulties a student faces adjusting to both simultaneously. In fact, the teaching of relevant general cultural schemata, as well as making ESL students aware of differences between their own cultural schemata and those of native English speakers, is essential for ESL students' to be able to leap over the *pragmatics-of-language* hurdle that can trip up social interactions. Banerjee at al.(1988, p. 346) argue that, in fact, "it is impossible to separate pragmatics from other aspects of language learning." If this is the case, ESL instruction must be sensitive to the subtle yet essential tools needed for student socialization, especially if self-esteem development is indeed a function of healthy socialization.

Maudet (1994) insists that an introduction to society is crucially important for ESL students. She argues that "..they may come from countries where the dating system is different, how people speak to one another is different, even something as stupid as fashion..there may be a girl who comes from Mexico and

[in Mexico] one wears braids down [their] back, and then suddenly everyone is making fun of the hair style..How can that child go home and feel good about herself?" Maudet further maintains that, "part of [an ESL student's] day needs to be in his or her own language to maintain the skills that they already have, and to give [these skills] some value." Multicultural education for everybody is one way to help ESL students maintain a healthy consideration for their own country and heritage. Counseling in the students' own language is another crucial aspect of an overall effort to help with the ESL student's potential cultural struggle.

Many foreign cultures stress academic achievement as the most important measure of success. "Many cultures expect a lot more for their kids than we do in this country, most of the time. So their self-esteem will be tied into [academic achievement]. Many ESL students put a high price on their school success, and their self-esteem can hinge upon that success" (Maudet, 1994). Therefore, situations in which the student can achieve

success academically must be orchestrated by the ESL instructor as frequently as possible.

While it is common knowledge that upbringing in the United States emphasizes social behavior and values, not all cultures ascribe to the same ideas of socializing adolescents. For instance, in Turner and Mo (1984), a claim is made that Eastern cultures, and the Chinese culture in particular, reflect substantially different values in the socialization experience of youth...[values whose] emphasis is in contrast to Western society, which emphasizes independence and self-reliance. It follows then, that often immigrant students will be confused as to socialization procedures as well as basic language. This could lead to embarrassment and ultimately lower self esteem.

Likewise, perhaps the biggest struggle for the adolescent who does not speak the language is simply that they are not *capable* of competing in any of the fields in which the typical adolescent is interested. "For a thirteen, fourteen, fifteen-year old coming into the country not speaking the language, not only are they

not competing academically because they can't say anything, but socially they're out as well" (Maudet, 1994).

Challenges

Jama (1992) points out that one particularly devilish challenge that faces ESL students is they have no choice but to absorb their new language and curriculum subject matter simultaneously. They cannot afford to wait for years, learning English, before they learn the materials covered in school curriculum. New arrivals from other countries may need as much as eight years to catch up and achieve on a level with their peers. Additionally, many children in ESL tracks may have been uprooted from their cultures and perhaps severely disturbed by experiences of civil war or other such disruptions in their native country.

Self Esteem

Self esteem, as well as the more broadly defined term, self-image, correlate significantly with such important aspects of adolescent adjustment as the adequacy of interpersonal relationships, moods, coping abilities, and personality development (Palazzi et al., 1990). Current definitions of self-esteem range from an individual's judgment of personal worthiness, both in their eyes and in the eyes of significant others to one's globalized perception of social worth, measured by assessing attitudes towards the self in a wide range of domains. Adolescence in particular is a period of enormous personal and environmental flux that can challenge self-esteem (Hamburg, 1974). It is widely known that adolescence is a critical period for self-examination and psychological vulnerability, and is generally recognized as the most dramatic period of development in the human life span with regard to the breath of change it involves (Beane et al., 1987). In fact, Freud (1958) considered the "storm and stress"

within the individual as the inevitable and universal consequence of adolescence.

Much of the literature reviewed supports the belief that growing up on today's social scene presents a greater challenge than in past years. Due to the challenges and stresses of school transition, comparable physical growth, and pubescence, adolescents are highly attuned to issues of self-image and self-esteem (Hoffman et al., 1992). What makes the middle school level particularly interesting is that, for many adolescents, it may be the last institution where young people may work with a group of adults who are willing to give them help and guidance (Beane et al., 1987). Mullis et al. (1992, p.59) claim that "as junior high school students move from a more protected environment to a larger more impersonal high school environment, where teachers, classmates, and even classrooms are constantly shifting, it is not surprising that they experience disturbing shifts in self image. Consequently, such unsettling events may contribute to the negative effects on adolescent self-esteem."

This study's focus on female adolescents is based primarily on the generally accepted contention that girls' self-image is very fragile in adolescence. In fact, the research that was conducted supported those assumptions on a variety of fronts. For one, girls are at more risk for developing depressed affect by the 12th grade because they experience more challenges in early adolescence than do boys (Peterson et al., 1991). In fact, research by Peterson et al.(1991) not only provides evidence that girls showed significantly more depressed affect and poorer "emotional tone" than boys, but that the difference appeared to emerge at about the 8th grade.

Furthermore, a new study, albeit controversial, surveyed U.S. elementary and middle schools and garnered evidence of the plummeting self-esteem among teenage girls (Bower, 1991). The survey, which was commissioned by the American Association of University Women (AAUW), involved 2,400 girls and 800 boys from 36 American public schools. Subjects of the study answered written statements probing global self esteem. The most

troubling of the findings is that of the 67 percent of the elementary school boys who responded "always" feeling "happy the way I am," 46 percent still felt that way by tenth grade. For girls, however, the figures dropped by more than half, from 60 percent to an alarming 29 percent. An AAUW pamphlet asserts that school-age girls represent the proverbial square peg attempting to fit in the round hole of most educational programming.

In compliance with the growing body of research that shows that girls lose confidence and self-esteem more than boys do when they reach adolescence, another theory suggests that girls may suffer earlier and more pronounced self-esteem problems than boys because the former experience the biological changes of puberty up to 18 months before the latter (Bower, 1991). Yet another theory states that adolescent girls lose their self-esteem more than their male counterparts because of pervasive messages from the media (Larsen, 1992). Commercial messages are often at the root of the discomfort and dissonance that adolescent females feel

(Beane et al., 1987). For instance, the heroes on children's network television are predominantly male. Cadoff (1992, p. 60) states, "There are all those Smurfs and just one Smurfette. There is a girl on the Ninja Turtles show, but she's not one of the turtles."

One group of researchers suggest that middle school girls gain increased self confidence and learn best through collaboration (with other students and faculty), not through competition among classmates as practiced in most schools (Bower, 1991).

Given that literature maintaining a brighter forecast of adolescent self-esteem was reviewed for this study, clues as to how these sunnier results were attained were of special interest. Research by Smith and Reynolds (1992) is consistent with another cross-cultural study (Offer et al., 1988) which indicated that universally adolescents are not in the throes of turmoil as generally and previously assumed (Hall, 1904). However, Reynolds and Smith's work was done with Jamaican youths and the researchers stress than any attempt to interpret behavior, and as we see it, self-

esteem, must be conducted "with an appreciation for the cultural context in which the behavior occurs" (Smith et al., 1992). This suggestion, in part, fueled the efforts of the present researchers to seek out a true feel for the culture of ESL programming in the United States.

Self-esteem is vastly important because it appears as if it is a "moderating factor in the use of status considerations in selecting social partners," or in common language friends (Hoffman et al., 1992).

Adolescents are in a stage of greater susceptibility to the judgment of others. Probably at no other time in life is the desire and need for acceptance by others so strong. The seemingly never-ending search for acceptance often leads to achievement conflicts, negative body image, and lowered self-esteem in adolescent girls. Many female adolescents are dissatisfied or at least confused with who they are and their physical appearance in relation to their "ideal," such as a famous model or actress (Newell et al., 1990).

Suggestions

The idea that adolescents need an "arena of comfort" (Simmons et al. 1987) in coping with early adolescent transitions is definitely relevant (Peterson et al., 1991). An inviting and safe environment is essential for healthy adolescent development.

One possible finding of this study may in fact be that female ESL students in fact *do not* suffer low self-esteem in comparison to their regular curriculum, adolescent peers. Verkuyten (1988) found that adolescents of ethnic minorities in the Netherlands in general do not have lower general self-esteem, despite what he considers basic "risk" variables for minority students: low status, prejudice, and discrimination. When addressing the question of why in light of their "unfavorable conditions", adolescents from ethnic minorities do not have lower self-esteem than their native-born contemporaries, Verkuyten presents four assumptions that would have to apply to students in order to make an argument for low self-esteem. The first assumption is that immigrants, or in this case ESL

students, know how society judges them (what Verkuyten calls *awareness*). Second, it is assumed that immigrants/ESL students must *agree* with the judgments made about them. Next, whether or not individuals think that group stereotypes are *applicable* to themselves remains to be seen. And finally, do ESL students *attach value* to the judgments of society (Verkuyten, 1988)?

Common sense dictates that when society looks upon someone as inferior and treats that person accordingly, it can damage the person's self-esteem. However, Verkuyten's (1988) research has made it clear that such lower self-esteem is not found among all ethnic minority adolescents. In his study, this phenomena is explained by the fact that adolescents from ethnic minorities focus more on the perceived judgments of family members than of non family members, such as teachers and friends.

Verkuyten (1988, p.864) argues that human beings do not behave passively when receiving judgments from the outside. "They interpret selectively and choose (to a

certain degree) those whose judgments they consider important."

Training Teachers

Based on the literature discussed on self-esteem in adolescents and ESL programming, it is possible that ESL methodologies could be engineered and designed to improve self-esteem. Paying attention to self-perceptions in today's middle school students, especially the highly vulnerable ESL population, is part of the evolving effort to provide a balanced and fulfilling education to all students.

If a lower self-esteem rating identifies a subgroup in which inability to develop normal levels of self-esteem sets them further apart from the rest of their peers, this plainly calls for preventative as well as treatment interventions.

One of the many challenges for future teacher preparation programs will be to encourage preservice ESL teachers to consider alternative instructional actions for dealing with lower self-esteem students. Preservice

training should also involve providing opportunities for teachers to recognize the ways in which experienced teachers interpret and respond to students with low self-esteem. Given that we know from Valentin (1993) that the ESL population is here to stay and growing, the ESL students today have potential to be our country's leaders tomorrow. Therefore, student self-esteem development should weigh into the choosing of instructional methodologies.

One potentially successful program that could bolster self-esteem in middle school ESL students is a community service program. Enlisting the student's help, energy, and ideas in setting up a school-based community service program gives students a chance to act on humanitarian ideals, become responsible, caring citizens in their new environment, and form invaluable, strong community attachments. At least one junior high school has implemented these ideas and met with overwhelming success (Adams, 1993).

Another excellent, successful method of bolstering ESL student self-esteem is to create a cultural exchange

program within the school. After all, ESL students are a "a rich resource for informing American students about the lives, cultures, nations, and values of young people from other parts of the world" (Orlova, 1993, p. 81). By harnessing the diversity of a school population, the schools benefit in a variety of ways including helping international students become more happily acclimated to American life as well as raising and motivating cultural awareness among American students.

One body of research reports that drama is an effective medium to use with ESL students because it lowers the student's anxiety about communication, simultaneously giving students more self-confidence and higher self-esteem (Radin, 1985). It must be emphasized here that adolescents are of a particularly sensitive age, and it's possible that the fear of performance can conceivably outweigh the benefits of drama.

While every new group of immigrants to land on U.S. shores is likely to stir xenophobic concerns about the dissolution of American culture, that American culture has always been made richer by the infusion of other

cultures. Modern American culture is by definition a polyglot of the heritage's of a vast array of peoples. Take advantage of newcomers; they can teach school communities as much as they themselves can be taught. Schools will only be richer for their presence (Valentin, 1993).

Chapter III: Design of the Study

Sample

This study surveyed 35 female adolescents, ages 13-17, of whom 16 were ESL students and 19 were in regular curriculum classes. The subjects come from a mainly rural area in Central Virginia, and live in or within a 20 mile radius of a medium-sized state university setting. Some students in the ESL classes were bussed in from the neighboring district, thereby adding "urban district" students to an otherwise "county district" sample. All of the subjects were of average to high intelligence, based on anecdotal information relayed by the subjects' homeroom teachers. None of the students were receiving special education services at the time of the questionnaire administration, aside from ESL instruction, which in this case is not considered special education.

Measure: The Instrument

In the past, self-esteem has been reliably measured using self-administered questionnaires. (Palazzi et al., 1990). In this study, designed to compare evaluations of the psychological health of adolescent females, the researchers chose to use the Piers-Harris Children's Self Concept Scale (PHCSCS) as their evaluation instrument. Subtitled, "The Way I Feel About Myself," the scale assesses self-concept in individuals 8-18 years of age. The eighty items on the PHCSCS cover six subscales: Physical Appearance and Attributes, Anxiety, Intellectual and School Status, Behavior, Happiness and Satisfaction, and Popularity. All items are descriptive statements written at a third grade reading level. Summary scores on the PHCSCS give an overall measure of self-concept, while sub scale scores permit more detailed interpretation. Other investigations of students of this age group have used the PHCSCS (Glovinsky-Fahsholtz, 1992).

Administration of the PHCSCS was based on the following strategy: presenting the "test" as a non-

threatening and nonacademic exercise, and emphasizing the following points: a) all responses are anonymous and will not be seen by parents or school officials, b) it is important that the questions are answered honestly, and finally, c)responses are private and students shouldn't attempt to share answers or discuss responses while taking the survey scale. The last three aspects of survey administration strategy were implemented to maximize the validity of the self-reported data.

After reading about the potential pitfalls of developing an independent survey (questionnaire) instrument (Reid, 1990, p. 336), the researchers were encouraged to select the validated PHCSCS. Taking into account "that ESL students from different languages and cultural backgrounds may also differ in the way they respond to normed surveys," (Reid, 1990) the researchers were careful to state the limitations of survey research with regard to the ESL population.

In Beretta (1986), ESL-research methodologies are scrutinized and evaluated. The choice to conduct our research in the field rather than in an artificially

controlled "laboratory" setting stems from common sense thinking as well as from an argument by Beretta (Beretta, 1986).

Offer et al.(1988) have made a recent argument that a standardized objective measure is methodologically superior to subjective essays. The reasoning behind this stance is that, with an objective measure at hand, the subjects of the study respond to the same set of stimuli (Smith et al., 1992).

Design

The steps taken in this study can be summarized in four phases of the study. Phase One involved an extensive literature review of all related, previous research in the areas of English as a Second Language and female adolescent self-esteem. Phase Two of the design involved researching into which standardized instrument would best suit the needs of the study being conducted, followed by the selection of The Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale, and the purchase of rights to this instrument. Administration and scoring of

the PHCSCS occurred in Phase Three, while the final phase of our design, Phase Four, involved the analysis and discussion of our data.

Chapter IV: Analysis of Results

Results

The Piers-Harris questionnaires were hand scored according to the Scoring Key. Raw scores were calculated for all 19 regular curriculum subjects as well as for all 16 ESL curriculum subjects. Likewise, scores on each of the six subscales, or "clusters", were calculated for all subjects in the study.

Subjects in regular curriculum scored in the 49th percentile based on their raw score mean, while ESL subjects scored in the 46th percentile. Based on each subject group's mean score in the first and second subscales, Behavioral and Intellectual/School Status, respectively, the ESL curriculum subjects ranked higher in the 65th and 49th percentiles, respectively, while the regular curriculum subjects ranked in the 51st and 38th percentile, respectively.

In Physical Appearance and Attributes, the third subscale, the regular curriculum subjects in the study ranked higher in the 48th percentile than did the ESL

curriculum subjects in the 25th percentile on the same subscale, as based on each group's specific subscale mean score. Likewise, the regular curriculum subjects reported higher scores (38th percentile) in the fifth subscale, Popularity, than did the ESL curriculum subjects (20th percentile).

In subscales four and six, Anxiety and Happiness/Satisfaction, respectively, the mean score from both groups in the sample ranked equally in the 37th and 39th percentiles, respectively.

Analysis

In order to determine if there was a statistically significant difference between the regular curriculum subjects' scores and the ESL curriculum subjects' scores, a T-Test was conducted to compare both groups' raw scores, as well as their scores on the six subscales. T-Tests revealed that the differences between the regular curriculum subjects' scores and the ESL curriculum subjects' scores were not statistically significant. The closest that the differences between

subject group scores came to being statistically significant was on one of the subscales, Cluster V: Popularity. Based on a generally accepted notion that popularity is frequently conformity in disguise, the fact that the ESL curriculum subjects ranked below the regular curriculum subjects suggests that the ESL students realize that they are, indeed, different from the mainstream student in many ways. The fact that students in this study ranked significantly lower in this arena of adolescent self-esteem should signal to the ESL instructor to help encourage the notion that popularity is not crucial to happiness and satisfaction with oneself, that non-conformity and being different is acceptable, and that developing unique strengths should be encouraged.

Perhaps the most troubling aspect of the results of the study is that, based on the mean raw score from each group of subjects, on average, data suggests that neither group of female adolescents ranked in the upper 50th percentile of self-esteem. Of course, a closer look at the raw scores from each subject in the regular

curriculum reveals that ten of the 19 subjects in that group individually scored above the 50th percentile on the Piers-Harris, while half of the ESL curriculum likewise ranked in the upper 50th percentile, according to individual raw scores. It seems then, that in the realm of raw scores, the subjects who fell below the 50th percentile weighted the raw score mean and subsequent group percentiles with dismally low individual raw scores. In fact, nine out of the 35 female adolescent subjects ranked in or below the 20th percentile in individual raw scores on the Piers-Harris.

These low rankings in global self-esteem based on the female adolescent subjects and their responses to the Piers-Harris are in accordance with the research discussed earlier regarding the growing concern with low self-esteem in female adolescents.

Summary

The following chapter begins with a summary of the study at hand, and will detail the limitations of the study, as well as the authors' conclusions.

Chapter V: Summary, Limitations, Conclusions

Summary

To reiterate, the steps that were taken in this study can be summarized in four phases of the study. Phase One involved an extensive literature review of all related, previous research in the areas of English as a Second Language and female adolescent self-esteem. Phase Two of the design involved researching into which standardized instrument would best suit the needs of the study being conducted, followed by the selection of The Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale, and the purchase of rights to this instrument. Administration and scoring of the PHCSCS occurred in Phase Three, while the final phase of our design, Phase Four, involved the analysis and discussion of our data.

The study's subjects included 19 female adolescents in regular curriculum classes and 16 female adolescents in ESL curriculum. Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale questionnaires were administered over a two-week period. After the questionnaires were scored, data was gathered

pertaining to the individual and mean raw scores for both groups of subjects, as well as the individual and mean scores on the six subscales.

The analysis of the data revealed no statistically significant difference between the raw score means of the regular curriculum subjects and the ESL curriculum subjects. Likewise, a statistical analysis of the difference between group means on the six subscales on the Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale revealed no statistically significant difference.

Limitations

The first, obvious limitation is that the sample size was small, based on the attempt to draw from one, narrow geographic area. Likewise, a closer look at the composition of ESL students might reveal an interesting ratio of immigrant to refugee populations, a ratio and comparison for which control must be administered in a future, broader study.

Life events such as serious disagreements between parents, sudden decrease in family income, and serious

abuse either within or outside of the family are often associated with a higher risk of disturbed self image in a study by Palazzi et al (1990). Accepted as one of the limitations of this study was the decision not to take into account the specific life events of the ESL students that may very well have a bearing on their projected, lower self-esteem.

Additionally, although every measure was made to ensure anonymity, the positive self-esteem results in the ESL students could very well reflect the fact that disclosure of negative self-esteem can be affected by the tendency to conceal socially undesirable feelings.

As stated in Beretta (1986, p. 152), "once the decision is made to undertake a field study of the effects of complete methods over time, we bid farewell to proof. It barely needs mentioning, since it has been said so often, that methods are not static, standardized treatments but instead, constantly varying, often overlapping, interacting sets of behaviors. Some may feel, then, that it seems too unscientific to attempt to measure such apparent chaos, keeping tabs on turbulence.

However, [we] would argue that if we use all the means at our disposal of documenting what happens. And if we use such controls as are feasible and desirable, we at least arrange our priorities to provide for plausible extrapolation."

Conclusions/Suggestions

Perhaps the most important step that interested parties can take in paving the way for ESL students is to determine a way for ESL students to learn the language, learn to compete, and learn to participate in the activities in the social world that goes on at that age *as fast as possible*. ESL students need a tremendous amount of support to improve their English, but at the same time they need the kind of encouragement that allows them to feel that what they already know is useful and worthwhile.

While this study focused on adolescent females, admittedly leaving their male counterparts out of the sphere of inquiry and research, one comment by a veteran ESL teacher struck the researchers as candid and honest,

and seemed to validate their interest in and subsequent study into the sometimes fragile state of female self-esteem: "the (ESL) males, especially in adolescence, seem to have, well, I don't know if they have the problems [that the girls have], but they express [the problems] differently. The boys very quickly become part of groups. They can immediately compete in sports...they have that medium. Girls, especially in adolescence, can be quite mean to one another. I've seen much more competition and clique-behavior among adolescent females than males. It is much more difficult for adolescent ESL girls to break into [the social groups], especially when they have a language barrier. And another difficulty experienced by kids who come from another country is that many girls from other cultures have social restrictions placed on them by their parents which are very different from those placed on girls from American culture" (Maudet, 1994). Maudet went on to add that self-esteem does not come from someone telling the student that she's wonderful. Responsible ESL instructors orchestrate situations in which their

students can achieve success academically, as well as socially.

Although the results of the study were less statistically significant than was hoped, the researchers are intrigued nonetheless by the obstacles that daunt the development of average self-esteem in female adolescents across the ESL and regular curricula. Based on the extensive literature review conducted in conjunction with this study, ESL students clearly face obstacles of their own in the public school setting. As the results of the study indicate, female ESL students scored roughly the same raw scores as female students in regular curriculum. So, while ESL students face unique challenges in self-esteem development, judging from the statistically insignificant difference between group raw scores, the regular curriculum females face differing but similarly quantitative obstacles.

Perhaps the most important message that this study shall advertise agrees with Beane et al.'s (1987, p.VIII) warning that "for many adolescents, [middle school] may be the last institution where young people

may work with a group of adults who are willing to give them help and guidance." In other words, below-average self-esteem in middle school students, and, in particular, ESL students and females, should garner immediate attention from, and cause great concern in, all relevant professionals, teachers, counselors, principals. If, for a variety of reasons, they are indeed the last, effective source of guidance for adolescents, middle school professionals need to attack the problem of low self-esteem in their students. Given Mullis et al.'s (1992, p.59) theory, that, "as junior high school students move from a more protected environment to a larger more impersonal high school environment, where teachers, classmates, and even classrooms are constantly shifting, they [potentially] experience disturbing shifts in self image," middle school employees must lend their professional knowledge as well as their compassion to ensure adequate self-esteem development in their charges.

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"THE WAY I FEEL ABOUT MYSELF"

The Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale

Appendix I:

Ellen V. Piers, Ph.D. and Dale B. Harris, Ph.D.

Piers-Harris Children's
Self Concept Scale

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Name: _____ Today's Date: _____

Age: _____ Sex (circle one): Girl Boy Grade: _____

School: _____ Teacher's Name (optional): _____

Directions: Here is a set of statements that tell how some people feel about themselves. Read each statement and decide whether or not it describes the way you feel about yourself. If it is *true or mostly true* for you, circle the word "yes" next to the statement. If it is *false or mostly false* for you, circle the word "no." Answer every question, even if some are hard to decide. Do not circle both "yes" and "no" for the same statement.

Remember that there are no right or wrong answers. Only you can tell us how you feel about yourself, so we hope you will mark the way you really feel inside.

TOTAL SCORE: Raw Score_____ Percentile_____ Stanine_____

CLUSTERS: I_____ II_____ III_____ IV_____ V_____ VI_____

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Appendix I: (cont.)

1. My classmates make fun of me ..... yes no
2. I am a happy person ..... yes no
3. It is hard for me to make friends ..... yes no
4. I am often sad ..... yes no
5. I am smart ..... yes no
6. I am shy ..... yes no
7. I get nervous when the teacher calls on me ..... yes no
8. My looks bother me ..... yes no
9. When I grow up, I will be an important person ..... yes no
10. I get worried when we have tests in school ..... yes no
11. I am unpopular ..... yes no
12. I am well behaved in school ..... yes no
13. It is usually my fault when something goes wrong ..... yes no
14. I cause trouble to my family ..... yes no
15. I am strong ..... yes no
16. I have good ideas ..... yes no
17. I am an important member of my family ..... yes no
18. I usually want my own way ..... yes no
19. I am good at making things with my hands ..... yes no
20. I give up easily ..... yes no
21. I am good in my school work ..... yes no
22. I do many bad things ..... yes no
23. I can draw well ..... yes no
24. I am good in music ..... yes no
25. I behave badly at home ..... yes no
26. I am slow in finishing my school work ..... yes no
27. I am an important member of my class ..... yes no
28. I am nervous ..... yes no
29. I have pretty eyes ..... yes no
30. I can give a good report in front of the class ..... yes no
31. In school I am a dreamer ..... yes no
32. I pick on my brother(s) and sister(s) ..... yes no
33. My friends like my ideas ..... yes no
34. I often get into trouble ..... yes no
35. I am obedient at home ..... yes no
36. I am lucky ..... yes no
37. I worry a lot ..... yes no
38. My parents expect too much of me ..... yes no
39. I like being the way I am ..... yes no
40. I feel left out of things ..... yes no

41. I have nice hair ..... yes no
42. I often volunteer in school ..... yes no
43. I wish I were different ..... yes no
44. I sleep well at night ..... yes no
45. I hate school ..... yes no
46. I am among the last to be chosen for games ..... yes no
47. I am sick a lot ..... yes no
48. I am often mean to other people ..... yes no
49. My classmates in school think I have good ideas ..... yes no
50. I am unhappy ..... yes no
51. I have many friends ..... yes no
52. I am cheerful ..... yes no
53. I am dumb about most things ..... yes no
54. I am good-looking ..... yes no
55. I have lots of pep ..... yes no
56. I get into a lot of fights ..... yes no
57. I am popular with boys ..... yes no
58. People pick on me ..... yes no
59. My family is disappointed in me ..... yes no
60. I have a pleasant face ..... yes no
61. When I try to make something, everything seems to go wrong ..... yes no
62. I am picked on at home ..... yes no
63. I am a leader in games and sports ..... yes no
64. I am clumsy ..... yes no
65. In games and sports, I watch instead of play ..... yes no
66. I forget what I learn ..... yes no
67. I am easy to get along with ..... yes no
68. I lose my temper easily ..... yes no
69. I am popular with girls ..... yes no
70. I am a good reader ..... yes no
71. I would rather work alone than with a group ..... yes no
72. I like my brother (sister) ..... yes no
73. I have a good figure ..... yes no
74. I am often afraid ..... yes no
75. I am always dropping or breaking things ..... yes no
76. I can be trusted ..... yes no
77. I am different from other people ..... yes no
78. I think bad thoughts ..... yes no
79. I cry easily ..... yes no
80. I am a good person ..... yes no

For examiner use only

	1–20	+ 21–40	+ 41–60	+ 61–80	= 1–80 Total
I					
II					
III					
IV					
V					
VI					
Total Score					

Appendix II: Raw Scores/Clusters

Regular Curriculum Students

Subject Number	Raw	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
01R	56	16	13	09	05	06	08
02R	55	13	14	09	10	09	08
03R	52	14	11	08	09	08	09
04R	77	16	17	13	12	11	10
05R	65	15	13	08	13	10	09
06R	65	14	14	13	12	11	09
07R	63	15	12	10	11	11	09
08R	50	14	10	04	09	05	05
09R	60	14	10	09	11	08	10
10R	62	13	12	09	14	09	10
11R	36	14	08	02	03	02	03
12R	65	15	16	09	12	04	10
13R	62	14	10	12	08	11	10
14R	47	09	15	10	04	09	04
15R	22	05	02	01	02	08	00
16R	52	10	08	07	08	10	09
17R	53	14	10	09	04	10	02
18R	21	04	04	00	03	03	04
19R	40	09	09	02	05	08	05

Appendix II: Raw Scores/Clusters (cont.)

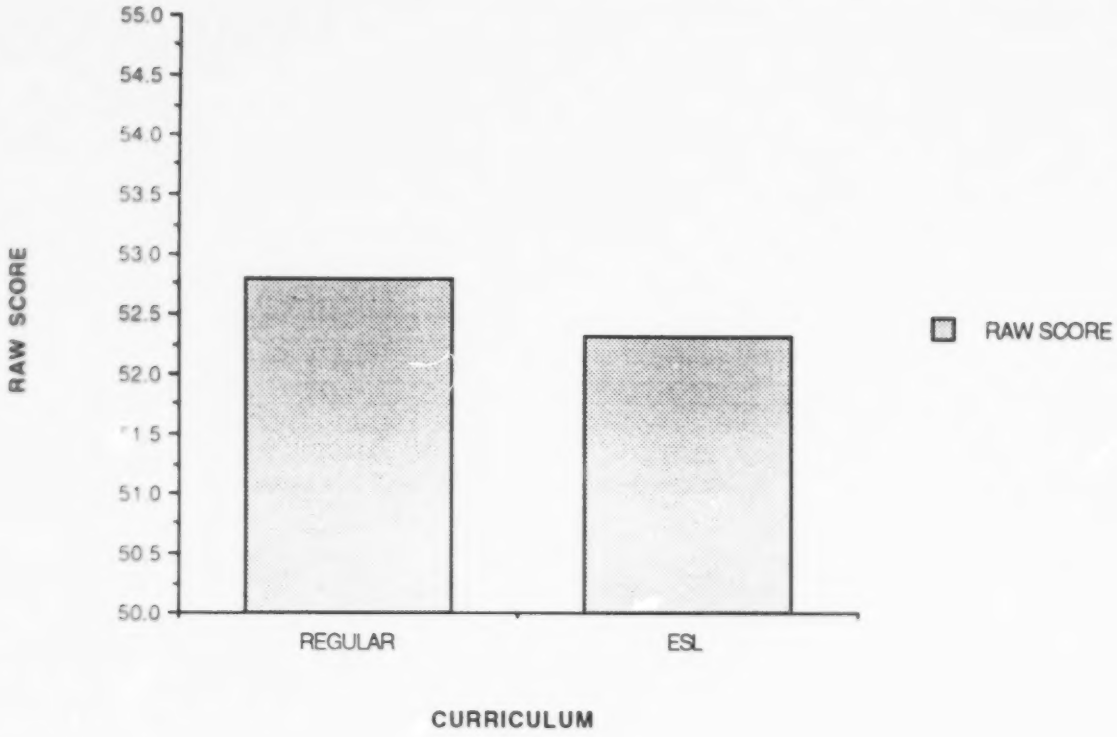
ESL Students

Subject Number	Raw	I	II	III	IV	V	V
01E	63	15	16	11	11	09	10
02E	46	11	08	03	10	07	07
03E	63	14	16	11	08	11	10
04E	71	15	15	12	11	12	10
05E	62	13	15	08	11	10	08
06E	70	15	17	12	10	10	10
07E	60	16	14	06	12	06	09
08E	68	14	16	10	13	11	08
09E	53	16	13	08	04	05	07
10E	27	13	05	00	02	00	05
11E	65	16	14	10	13	08	10
12E	40	15	09	01	04	03	05
13E	34	14	08	01	02	02	02
14E	50	14	10	06	11	00	09
15E	39	13	10	02	01	01	03
16E	26	11	05	01	03	00	05

Appendix III: AVERAGES

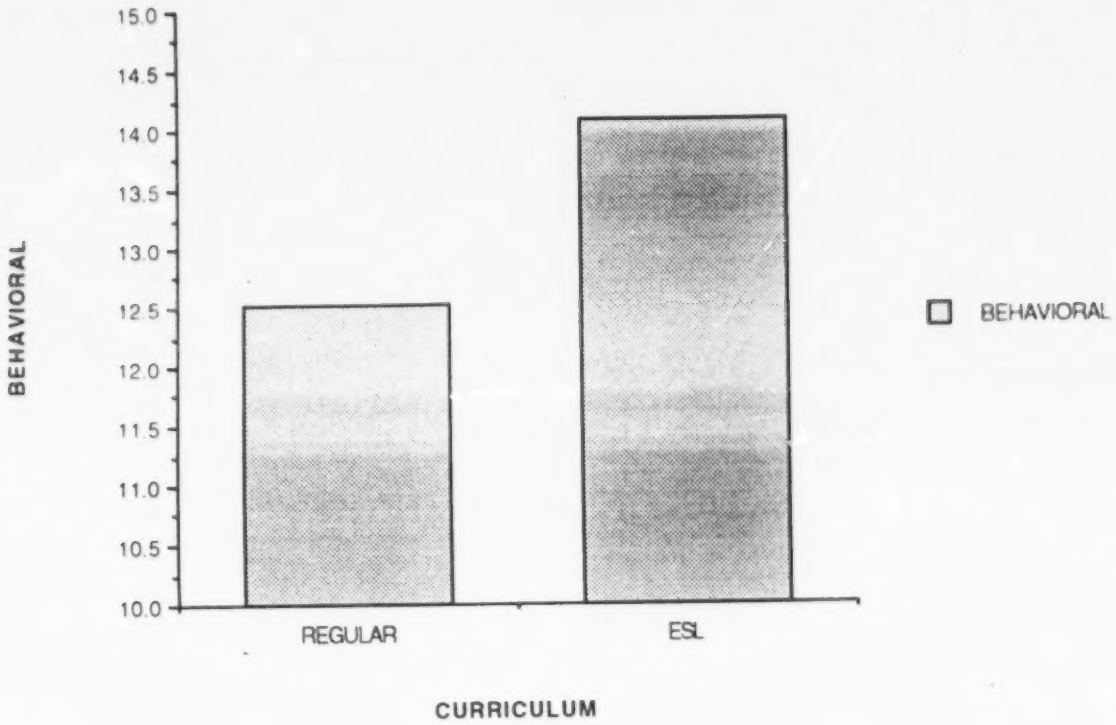
	Raw
Reg. Curric.	52.8
ESL	52.3
	Cluster I
Reg. Curric.	12.5
ESL	14.1
	Cluster II
Reg. Curric.	11
ESL	12
	Cluster III
Reg. Curric.	7.6
ESL	6.4
	Cluster IV
Reg. Curric.	8.2
ESL	7.9
	Cluster V
Reg. Curric.	8.1
ESL	6.0
	Cluster VI
Reg. Curric.	7.1
ESL	7.4

Appendix IV: Statistical Significance-Graphs for Raw Score and Clusters

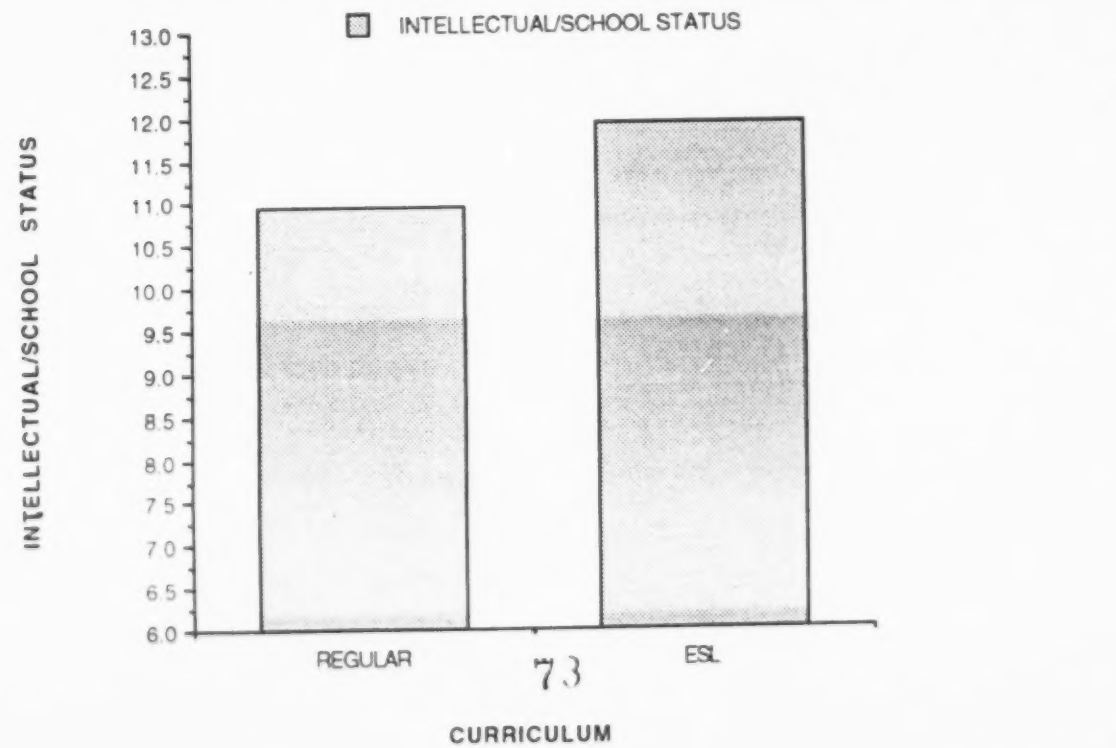


Appendix IV: (cont.)

CLUSTER I: BEHAVIORAL

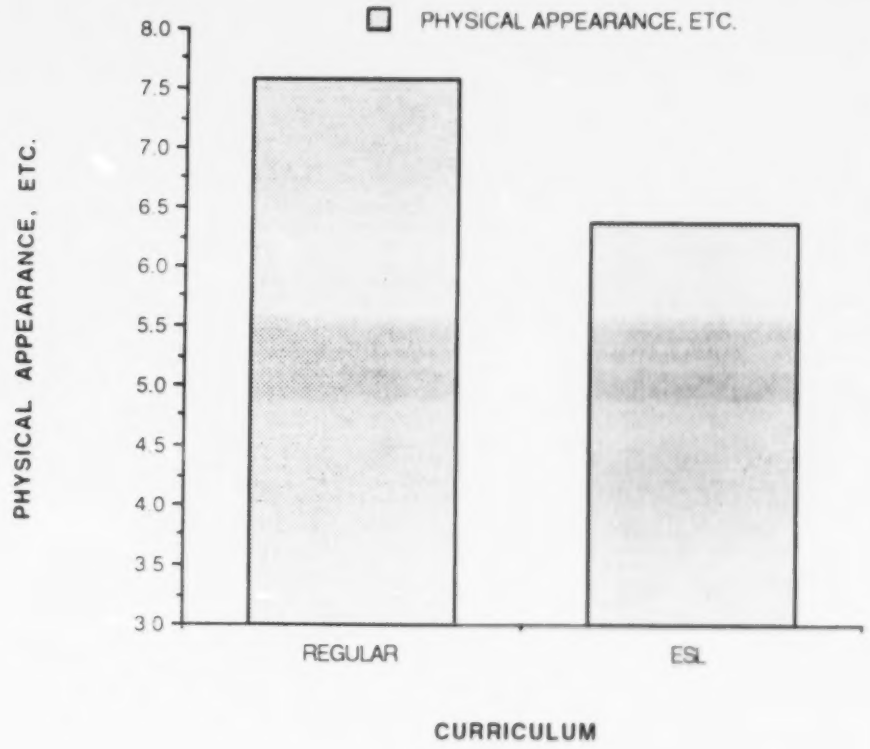


CLUSTER II: INTELLECTUAL & SCHOOL STATUS

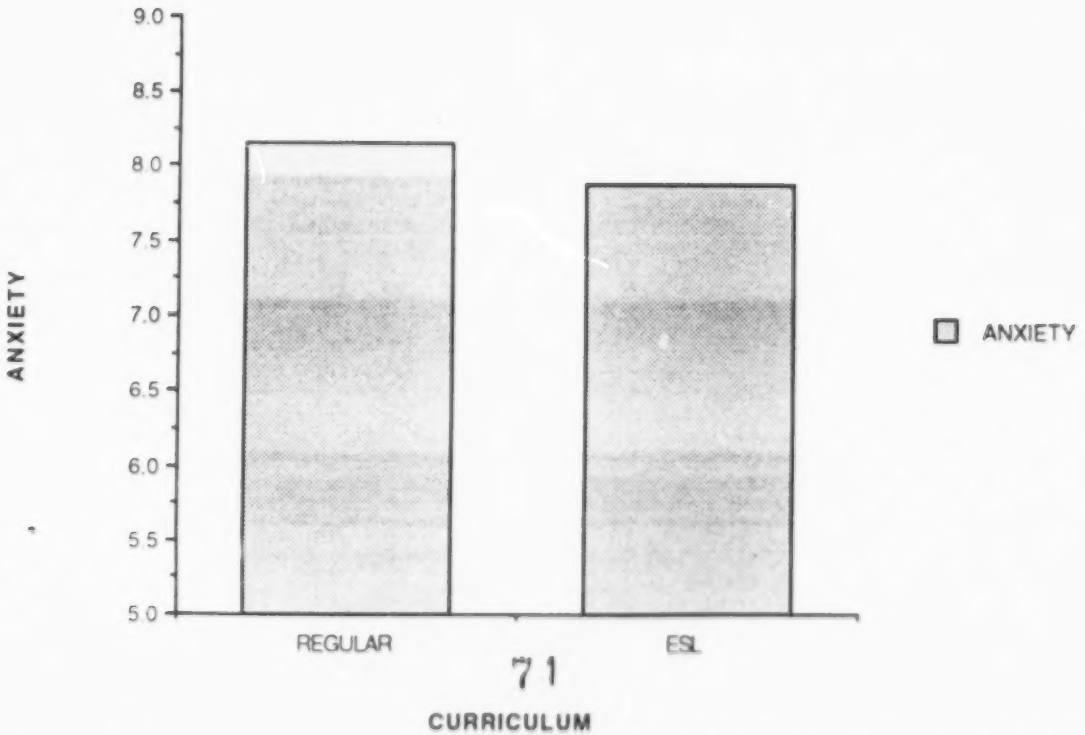


Appendix IV: (cont.)

CLUSTER III: PHYSICAL APPEARANCE & ATTRIBUTES

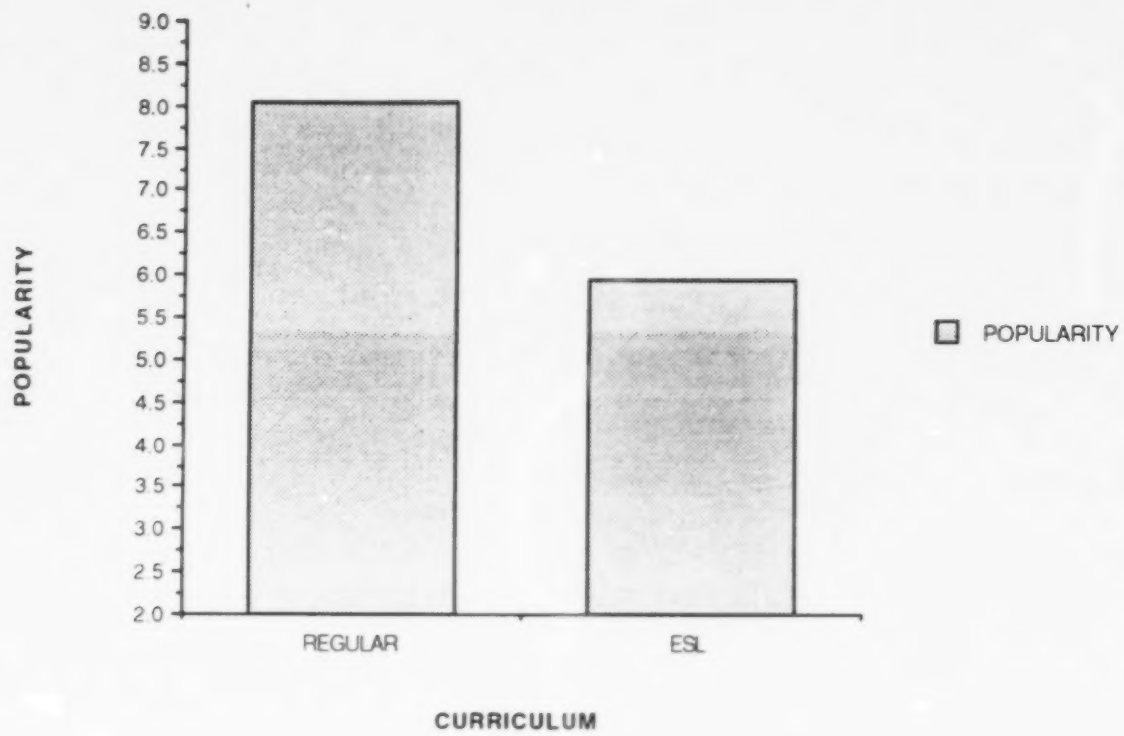


CLUSTER IV: ANXIETY



Appendix IV: (cont.)

CLUSTER V: POPULARITY



CLUSTER VI: HAPPINESS & SATISFACTION